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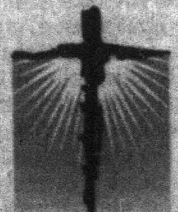
JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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APR 09 2009

ESTABLISHED SINCE 1877
APRIL 2, 2009
VOL. 133
No. 14



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Tornado sweeps away pair of churches

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

A powerful tornado ripped through Simpson County near Magee in the early hours of March 26, destroying one Mississippi Baptist Church and severely damaging another.

Corinth Church was reduced to rubble, while Goshen Church sustained roof and water damage. The Goshen Church pastorium was also heavily damaged.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency reported that 60 homes were damaged and 20 people were injured. Seventeen people were treated in local hospitals, while three were transported to the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

By early afternoon March 26, a Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force feeding unit from Briar Hill Church, Florence, was operating under the direction of the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

The unit was able to provide meals for residents and emergency response workers through March 28. Parts of the city of Magee were initially without electricity and water. The unit prepared 1,760 meals, with eight Task Force volunteers as well as six or seven local volunteers, according to Vernon Boetler, a member of Briar Hill Church who was manning the feeding unit.

"We were all asleep, and about 1:45 a.m. we heard a noise, and the power went off," said Corinth Church Pastor Jay Wesbrooks. "A tree fell on the house. Water came pour-



MOBILIZING FOR RELIEF — Two unidentified Mississippi Baptist volunteers prepare to assist in relief efforts following the Simpson County tornado which struck in the early morning hours of March 26. The ruins of Corinth Church can be seen in the background. (Photo by Tony Martin)

ing through the roof. As soon as we felt like it was safe, we went to check on our neighbors. Their house was demolished. They had managed to get into the hall with about fifteen seconds to spare. They were okay."

Corinth Church's walls were brought completely down, and bricks were strewn all over the property. One of the few identifiable parts of the church still standing was the baptistery. The American flag and the Christian flag used during Vacation Bible School were found in the rubble, however, as was a cross used for Good Friday services. All were retrieved and displayed in front of the wreckage.

Wesbrooks, who has pastored the church for seven years, said, "The building is destroyed, but the church is still alive. We are going to come back and rebuild. The weather is not going to stop us."

According to Johnny Sykes, missions director for Simpson Association, "The church will meet temporarily at the South Fork Fish House. They will rebuild."

With no building in which to worship, services were held in the parking lot of the church on the Sunday morning after the tornado.

"It was an awesome day," said Wesbrooks. "Not only did we find the flags and the cross, but we also found the church's pulpit. It was in a hall behind the baptistery which wasn't completely destroyed. We took the pulpit and used the front steps of the church as a podium."

Accompanied by an electric keyboard, the church's adult praise team sang Awesome God, as did a combined choir of preschoolers, children, and youth. Other hymns and songs, appropriate for the occasion, included Sanctuary, Worthy of Worship, and Just When I Need Him Most.

"We were able to bring in some chairs — several folks donated chairs — and people had lawn chairs, too. We had between three and four hundred people in attendance."

Wesbrooks' message had three points: the church had gathered Sunday morning to honor the Lord for the past; to look to God for comfort for the day; and to ask Him for guidance for the future.

"It was a little like a funeral," Wesbrooks said. "It is like losing a good friend, but we can look to God. I had what seemed like hundreds of people come to me after the service and say, 'We're ready to move forward.'"

Wesbrooks wanted all to know how grateful the church is. "We've had 99 years of good history, but this isn't the end. We're still writing our history."

For more information on the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, contact the MBCB Men's Ministry Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: cwright@mbcb.org.

To contribute to the ministry of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, make checks payable to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and designate "Disaster Relief" on the memo line. Mail to MBCB Business Services, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.



SURVEYING THE DAMAGE — Adrian Stringer (left) a member of Pine Grove Church, Magee, and Donna Swarts, a member of Goodwater Church, Magee, inspect the heavily damaged pastorium of Goshen Church in Simpson County. The home was in the path of the tornado which swept through the county on March 26. (Photo by Tony Martin)



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

EDITOR
William H. Perkins Jr.
wperkins@mbcb.org

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Tony Martin
tmartin@mbcb.org

LAYOUT/DESIGN
Benjamin Ivey
bivey@mbcb.org

ADVERTISING
Dana Richardson
drichardson@mbcb.org

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Brenda Quattlebaum
bquattlebaum@mbcb.org

EDITOR EMERITUS
Don McGregor

Baptist Record Advisory Committee:
Marcus Bowers, Brandon
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Send changes of address to: The
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and
address changes to: The Editor,
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800
Fax: (601) 292-3330
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

VOLUME 133 • NUMBER 14
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4
and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist
Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street,
Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per
year payable in advance. Economy plans
available for cooperating Mississippi churches.
Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS.
Member, Association of State Baptist Papers.
Deadlines: News items — one calendar
week prior to requested publication date.
Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to
requested publication date. All submissions
are subject to editing.

A radically different world

It seemed like a sophisticated adult game, and what teenager doesn't yearn for a taste of adulthood? So it was that Jessie Logan of Cincinnati undressed, took nude photos of herself with her high-tech cell phone, and texted the photos to her boyfriend. After all, haven't a lot of modern teens' role models — Hollywood starlets and pop music celebrities — done the same thing?

When Jessie's romantic relationship with the boy ended, however, he got revenge by texting Jessie's nude photos to his friends, who texted the photos to their friends, who texted the photos to their friends...

We all know what a cruel place high school can be, and we all know what happened next. Suddenly, Jessie was no longer living a dream existence in the world of her perverse Hollywood role models. "When she would come to school, she would always hear, 'Oh, that's the girl who sent the picture. She's just a whore,'" Jesse's friend, Lauren Taylor, told NBC News.

"She was being attacked and tortured," said her mother, Cynthia Logan.

So it was that teenager Jessie Logan of Cincinnati hung herself in her closet over the shame and humiliation of her introduction to "sexting" — using a cell phone camera to transmit intimate photos of oneself to trusted others. Only, those trusted others like Jessie's boyfriend often turn out not to be so trustworthy.

The young victims are left with a lifetime of ridicule and regret. With the advent of the Internet and cell phone ages the photos, like a bag of feathers emptied into the wind, can never be retrieved. In a culture like ours that long ago shed any respect for human life, young people can easily see suicide as the best way out of their predicament.



No mention is made in the news reports of what (if anything) has happened to the ex-boyfriend, but after a wave of such incidents law enforcement officials have taken drastic steps to get the epidemic under control. They have begun to charge the minors who produce or possess such materials with a variety of child pornography offenses. In the matter of just the last couple of weeks, at least two dozen minors have been arrested for what surely seems to them to be a harmless adult pastime.

That may seem harsh, but officials don't want another Jessie Logan to be victimized.

Jessie's mother said she knew something was amiss but was not aware of the enormity of the situation in Jessie's mind. She could have spoken for many parents.

"I only had snapshots, bits and pieces, until the very last semester of school," Logan told Matt Lauer on the NBC Today Show.

As much as we would like for it not to be so, our children are growing up in a radically different world than did most of us. Today's culture quickly leads them into dark places from which there is no return. That may not be much different from the way we grew up, but there are a lot more of those dark places today, and getting there is a lot easier.

Even something as simple and utilitarian as a cell phone has been twisted into a way to ruin young people's lives — and that's just the beginning. A quick scan of internet sites like MySpace and Facebook will reveal troubling, if not illegal, information and activities.

The popular video posting site, YouTube, contains thousands of videos of young people using endless foul language, wearing inappropriate attire (or very little attire), and engaging in inappropriate and suggestive conduct. While operations like YouTube are constantly policing their sites, they are not very good watchdogs and apparently have some mighty strange ideas of right and wrong.

Lastly, we adults are obviously not setting a very good example. That's not even debatable. When young people see their Hollywood role models — virtually all of them adults — acting out inappropriately, they get the idea that it's permissible to act like that.

As parents, youth Sunday School teachers, and Christian role models ourselves, we must get through to our young people that the ways of the world are not the ways of God. We must do that first by cleaning up our own acts and displaying an appropriate Christian lifestyle for all to see. Secondly, we must warn our young people of the sophisticated snares that Satan has set for them and how to avoid his traps. Lastly, we must endeavor to change the culture.

For all three steps, prayer would be a good place to start. Then, let's engage our young people before it's too late for some of them.

Texas education board revises language on origins of life

AUSTIN, Texas (BP and local reports) — A day after failing to uphold a 20-year-old requirement that Texas public high school students evaluate the "strengths and weaknesses" of scientific theories including evolution, the State Board of Education on Friday morning ratified new standards requiring biology students to "analyze, evaluate, and critique" scientific theories.

Additionally, the language, approved by a 13-2 vote, requires "examining all sides of scientific evidence" and encourages "critical thinking."

Jonathan Saenz, legislative affairs director for the Texas-based Free Market Foundation, said the board action was "a huge victory for school students and validation that the people of Texas and the State Board of Education reject censorship in the classroom and embrace open and critical discussion in the science classroom."

Saenz wrote on his blog that he believed the mounting pressure from the public on the elected board was evident in Friday's vote.

Meanwhile, Texas Citizens for Science's Steven Schafersman

— who opposed the "strengths and weaknesses" language — said that while the new language is preferred to the old language, it's still problematic.

"Of course, the new language can be read that will permit anti-evolution Creationists to attack Biology textbooks, and they most certainly will in 2011" [when the new requirements take effect], he wrote on a blog for the Houston Chronicle.

The full text of the board's adopted language reads: "In all fields of Science; analyze, evaluate and critique scientific explanations of science by using empirical evidence, logical reasoning, and experimental and observational testing including examining all sides of scientific evidence of those scientific explanations so as to encourage critical thinking by the student."

Democrats Rene Nunez and Mary Helen Berlanga cast the lone dissenting votes.

Texas science standards are revised every 10 years, which makes the Texas decision important because of the massive scale of textbook purchases made by states like Texas and California. Publishers cannot easily or profitably publish multiple editions

of the same textbook for different states, so smaller, less influential states must buy the available textbooks tailored for large purchasers like Texas and California.

A state like Mississippi, for example, would be hard pressed to force textbook publishers to bend to local arguments about wording, since the state does not purchase anywhere near as many textbooks as the big states.

The Texas education board was bombarded with e-mails, letters, phone calls, and editorials from evolution-only proponents and critics in the weeks leading up to the meeting March 25-27 in Austin.

The effort to retain the "strengths and weaknesses" requirement failed March 26 in a 7-7 vote with one absent member who would have opposed the language.

Supporters of evolution had assailed the 20-year-old "strengths and weaknesses" clause as a back door to teaching biblical creationism, while critics of evolution-only spoke of weaknesses in Darwinian theory.

Those who testified March 25 before the board included Eugenie Scott, director of the National Center for Science

Education and a vocal critic of the intelligent design movement, and Pierre Velasquez of San Antonio, a 31-year veteran science teacher who said preventing teachers from discussing strengths and weaknesses in scientific theories would stifle classroom discussion.

The Texas Republican Party entered the fray on March 7, adopting a resolution titled "Supporting Rigorous Educational Standards for Science in Texas" that opposed abandoning the strengths and weaknesses requirement.

Meanwhile, leading the opposition was the Texas Freedom Network, founded by Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and daughter of the late Texas Gov. Ann Richards. Texas Freedom Network, which bills itself as "a mainstream voice to counter the religious right," has mounted a Stand Up for Science campaign that included a March rally at First United Methodist Church in Austin.

A national Zogby poll released earlier this year showed 78% of respondents favored "teaching evidence for and against Darwin's Theory."

Ethicists challenging Obama on stem cells

WASHINGTON (BP) — Pro-life ethicists have challenged President Obama's March 24 description of his recent executive order involving destructive stem cell research.

In his nationally televised news conference, the president did not represent accurately the content or effect of his stem cell order nor did he demonstrate he actually had grappled with the ethical issues involved, despite his contention to the contrary, the ethicists said.

Asked late in the hour-long news conference about his March 9 order lifting a ban on federal funds for stem cell research that destroys human embryos, Obama said "the guidelines" he provided passed the test of being "strong moral guidelines, ethical guidelines."

"What we have said is that for embryos that are typically about to be discarded, for us to be able to use those in order to find cures for Parkinson's or for Alzheimer's or for ...all sorts of other debilitating diseases, juvenile diabetes, that ...it is the right thing to do," the president told reporters, according to a transcript published by The New York Times.

Obama said he is "glad to see progress is being made in adult stem cells, and if the science determines that we can completely avoid a set of ethical questions or political disputes, then that's great... I have no investment in causing controversy. I'm happy to avoid it if that's where the science leads us, but what I don't want to do is predetermine this based on a very rigid ideological approach, and that's what I think is reflected in the executive order I signed."

His order, however, did not include guidelines, the pro-life ethicists pointed out.

"I'm a little puzzled at the president's statement about

guidelines, since he didn't set guidelines but instead called for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to come up with guidelines" within 120 days, said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville.

Based on Obama's executive order, NIH "could, theoretically, fund stem cell lines taken from embryos created explicitly for the purpose of being destroyed," bioethics specialist Wesley Smith wrote on his weblog.

Smith also said the nature of Alzheimer's makes it unlikely to be cured by embryonic stem cells — a reality acknowledged even by some scientists who support embryonic stem cell research (ESCR).

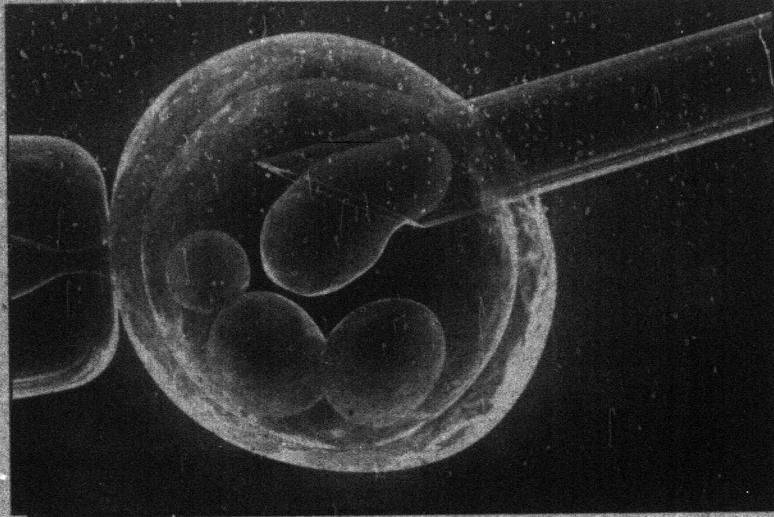
The ERLC's Land said he was "glad to hear President Obama reiterated that moral concerns are one of the primary components of any decision related to research that involves human life."

Yet, he and "many other pro-lifers are dismayed that he seems to equate the pro-life position with a 'rigid ideological approach.' What to some may appear to be rigidity, to others are profound, unchanging, moral convictions," Land told Baptist Press.

Smith said Obama himself based "his order on a very rigid ideological approach that views nascent human life [as] so much chopped liver. Indeed, as far as I can tell, he took federal funding just as far as the law" permits.

Land said he is pleased the president "is open to alternative approaches that would not require the sacrificing of our preborn citizens in order to harvest their stem cells."

Among such alternatives produced by scientists are induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells,



which are reprogrammed adult stem cells that have the properties of embryonic stem cells and do not require harming embryos. The adult stem cells can be found in, for instance, skin cells.

"If President Obama means what he says, then all he has to do is urge NIH to give maximum support to research with induced pluripotent stem cells rather than harvesting the stem cells from human embryos, who then die," Land said. "Not to put too fine a point on it — the use of stem cells harvested from embryos is becoming scientifically obsolete and unnecessary as we speak."

In his order, however, Obama rescinded a 2007 order by President Bush designed to ensure studies on stem cells with embryonic-like qualities are eligible for federal funds as long as they do not harm embryos.

About how much he had "wrestled with the morality or ethics" of funding experiments that destroy human embryos, Obama said, "I wrestle with these issues every day. Look, I believe that it is very important for us to have strong moral guidelines, ethical guidelines, when it comes to stem cell research or anything that touches on ... the issues of possible cloning or issues related to... the human life sciences."

"I wrestle with it on stem cell; I wrestle with it on issues like abortion," the president said.

Obama's March 9 order overturned Bush's 2001 rule barring the use of federal funds for stem cell research that

results in the destruction of human embryos. Bush permitted, however, grants for experiments on stem cell lines, or colonies, already in existence.

Because of their ability to develop into other cells and tissues, stem cells provide hope for producing cures for a variety of diseases.

Many scientists have promoted ESCR, because stem cells from embryos are pluripotent, meaning they can transform into any cell or tissue in the body. Extracting stem cells from an embryo, however, destroys the donor. ESCR has yet to provide treatments for human beings and has been plagued by the development of tumors in lab animals.

Meanwhile, a handful of state legislatures are trying to carve a different path in what some are calling the latest front in the nation's culture wars.

In the days since Obama made his March 9 announcement, legislatures in Oklahoma, Georgia, and Mississippi have taken steps toward restricting or prohibiting embryonic stem cell research.

Additionally, Oklahoma's legislature passed a bill that could provide more than one million dollars to adult stem cell research — which does not involve embryos — and a Texas Senate committee considered a bill that would establish an adult stem cell research consortium to help coordinate ethical forms of stem cell research in the state.

Looking back

10 years ago

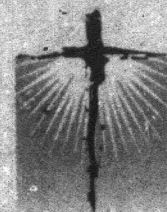
First Church, Long Beach, is among the first churches in Mississippi to participate in Celebrate Jesus 2000, distributing thousands of Bibles and other materials to people in the community, involving over 300 from the church.

20 years ago

Richard D. Land is installed at the fifth executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. Land was challenged by SBC President Jerry Vines and by theologian/author Carl F.H. Henry to link faith with action, words with deeds, and example with leadership.

50 years ago

The trustees of Southern Seminary vote 28-6 to rescind the action of June 12, 1958 dismissing professors, and instead "respectfully requests" the resignation of the men.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

APRIL 2, 2009

VOL. 133

No. 14



YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Pension bill filed

DALLAS (BP) — U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) has introduced a bill related to church pension boards which will protect and strengthen church plans. The bill, S. 689, would respect the congregational polity of churches like that of Southern Baptists and also would facilitate the use of automatic enrollment features that encourage broader participation in church plans. Democratic Sen. Benjamin Cardin of Maryland has signed on as a co-sponsor. O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, applauded the measure. "The implementation of this legislation will enable us to better serve those who are serving the Lord throughout this great nation and the world," Hawkins said. GuideStone is the former Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and is based in Dallas. Hutchison, a Republican, said in a statement, "The church pension reforms I introduced are simple and fair. Church pensions provide critical support to clergy members across the country. They should not be punished for devoting their lives to serve others. I will continue working with my colleagues to pass this important legislation." Hawkins added, "Once again, Sen. Hutchison has stepped forward to introduce legislation in support of church plans. Her continued commitment to helping pastors and others serving within churches and ministry organizations is greatly appreciated," Hawkins said.

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Clue: U=B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: James One: Twenty-five

THE MIND

You used to hear more than you do now the motto of a national organization that says, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." One of our former vice presidents got mixed up while he was making a speech and said, "A mind is a terrible thing." While he may have been right, for most of us we only wish that our minds were a little sharper. There is always some new insight someone is sharing. The other day I saw a sign that read, "A closed mind is a wonderful thing to lose." It was a play on words with the whole mind idea and so cleverly presented that it caught my attention and forced me to think about how many times our closed mindedness hurts us. I am not talking about being closed minded about things that are absolute and eternal, but I am talking about how too frequently we shut our minds to new ideas, new ways, and even new people.

Unquestionably, you need to find the bedrock, solid convictions of life, anchor them in the Lord, and not be shifted. I am aware of that old cliché that says, "Some people are so broadminded that they are flat headed." By the same token, some people are so closed minded that they live entrapped in a dungeon of their own self-imposed ignorance. It is a dim and dark room and while others may do the same, there is an unusually eerie sense of isolation.

In various ways, Jesus kept trying to get His disciples to broaden their view of life and to understand more than just what they had locked into about people. When the disciples finally knew the folks were baptizing but were not of their little group, they reported it to



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Jesus. He told His disciples, "He that is not against me is for me" (Luke 9:50). Another time when Jesus' disciples were looking around and seeing the world as they thought it to be, He asked them to take another look. He said, "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest?' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for the harvest" (John 4:36). He broadened their understanding. To a man who was only a few breaths away from death, a man who apparently everybody except God Himself had given up on, Jesus gave him a new view of life when the thief on the cross heard Him say, "Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

There are new things, hopeful horizons, new experiences, and marvelous spiritual encounters that you can miss if

you just sit in the solitude of your own senses. Study God's Word, seek His mind and heart, and be open to the new possibilities that exist. *If a closed mind is a good thing to lose, possibly of equal or of more importance a good thing to lose is an open mouth.*

The Bible is filled with warnings, instructions, and admonitions concerning the control of our tongue. James tells us in his small epistle in the very first chapter that the control of our mouths is one of the indicators of whether or not we have true religion. Have you ever come across someone whose mouth was an open fire hydrant of criticism, cynicism, and bitter and salacious remarks yet postured themselves as a paragon of virtue and a saint of the highest order?

You can tell a lot about people by where they go to church, the people they associate with, and even by how much Bible knowledge they

have. — but if you want to see their hearts and what actually resides inside, all you need to do is let them open their mouths. *An open mouth that hurts instead of helps, ruins rather than redeems, and attacks rather than assists is a good thing to lose.*

Let me share with you one last thought about things that would be wonderful to lose. *An empty heart is a wonderful thing to lose.* It does not take an extensive search in our culture to find someone who has plenty of things. Intellectually they may be keen and physically they may be fit, but their heart is empty. They struggle with life. They have unfilled relationships and an undiscovered purpose for living. The heart is empty. It was this very issue that Jesus addressed when He said, "I have come to give life and to give it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Jesus transforms just an existence into an experience that never ends. Those of us who know Him have not just stumbled upon a religious niche, but we have discovered life itself, which is both rewarding now and for eternity. *An empty heart is a great thing to lose.*

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

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TOPEKA BAPTIST CHURCH, JAYESS, Miss., Lawrence County, is accepting resumes for a youth director/minister. If interested, please mail to Topeka Baptist Church, attn: personnel committee chairman, 807 China Grove Rd., Jayess, MS 39641.

MEADOWVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, Starkville, MS, is seeking pianist. Please send resumes to 300 Linden Circle, Starkville, MS 39759, attn: personnel committee.

NORTHSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH, Vicksburg, MS., is seeking full-time Pastor. Send resumes to pastor search committee, 28 Mingo Road, Vicksburg, MS 39183.

NORTH COLUMBIA BAPTIST Church, Columbia, Miss., is seeking a full-time minister of music/education. Please email resumes to ncbc1@hotmail.com or mail them to P. O. Box 271, Columbia, MS 39429.

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Dec. 4-10A Texas Christmas Carol

COLLEGE NEWS

1. Mississippi College recently named Bill Cranford as MC's chief information officer. Cranford has served at MC since May, 2000.



1. Cranford



3. MC Dyslexia conference



4. Money Talks panelists



7. Byrd Memorial Preaching Award

2. Karl Rove, former senior advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff to President George W. Bush headlined Mississippi College's annual scholarship banquet Mar. 30.

3. The Mississippi College Dyslexia Conference drew nearly 150 participants. Conference leaders included Rick Anderson, Karen Vickery, Merleen Ivey, and Mitto Bilbo. Shown are conference attendee Alice Stringer and Anderson.

4. Mississippi College professors led an all-star line-up of business experts offering advice on America's troubled economy. The radio show

"Money Talks" will air their suggestions to a statewide audience in early April. Shown are panelists Nancy Anderson, Chris Burford, Gerald Lee, Mark McComb, and Doug Muenzenmay.

5. U.S. Senator Thad Cochran will deliver the Blue Mountain College commencement address during the May 9 graduation ceremonies. Named in 2006 as one of "America's 10" Best Senators" by Time magazine, Cochran also served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives from Mississippi's fourth congressional district.

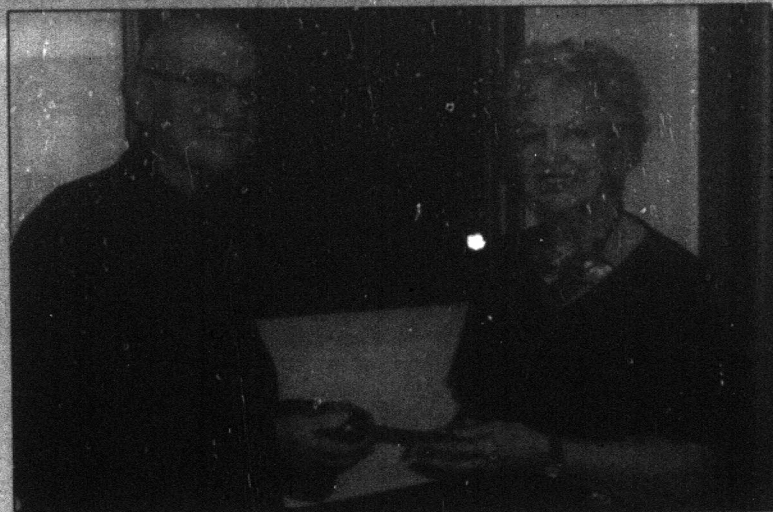
6. Kosciusko native Morris Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, visited and spoke at Mississippi College Mar. 24.

7. Mississippi College senior Chase Porter was the recipient of the Byrd Memorial Preaching Award for the third year in a row. The award is a cash award presented annually by the family of the late Mr. and Mrs. David Q. Byrd, Sr. Shown are Wayne VanHorn, Ann Brian, Charlotte Byrd, Porter, Eric Pratt, and Harrell Byrd.

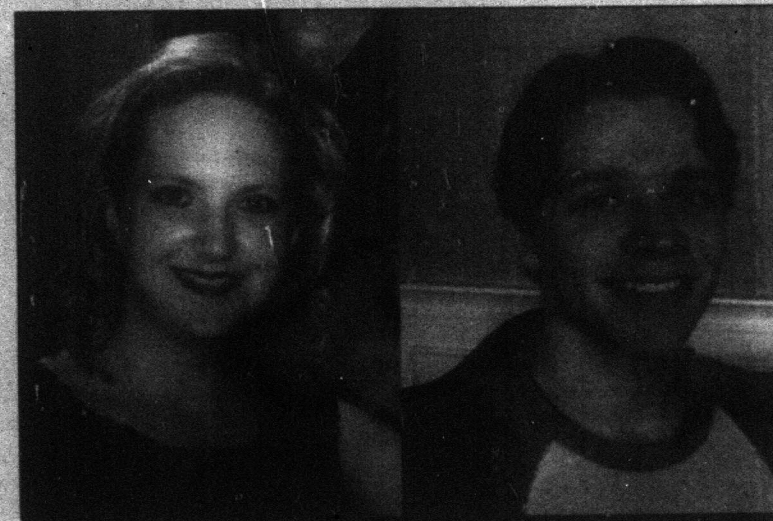
8. The Mississippi College radio station celebrated its 20th anniversary Mar. 28 at the Park on the River in Flowood.

9. Nancy Davis, Clinton, was named Mississippi College's 30,000 member Alumni Association leader recently. Shown are Bill Smith and Davis.

10. William Carey University assistant professor Ellen Elder and Laurel music major Christopher Napier are among 72 outstanding faculty and students from 36 Mississippi public and private universities and colleges to receive special recognition from the Mississippi Legislature during the Higher Education Appreciation Day - Working for Academic Excellence (HEADWAE). Established in 1988, HEADWAE honors individual academic achievement and the overall contribution to the state's public and private institutions of higher learning. Shown are Elder and Napier.



9. Smith and Davis



10. Elder and Napier

REVIVAL AND HOMECOMINGS

1. Philadelphia Church, Etta: Revival, Apr. 5 - 8; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Sun. - Wed., 7 p.m.; George Mims, speaker; Gerald Fredrick, music; Bobby Irvin, pastor.
2. Carey Chapel Church, Red Banks: Revival, Apr. 5 - 8; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Matt Hess, Chuck Herring, Melvin York, and Tommy Vinson, speakers; Jack Childs, Jason Mewborne, and the Carey Chapel Choir, music.
3. Bay Springs Church, Bay Springs: Revival, Apr. 5 - 8; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., noon and 7 p.m.; Gene Henderson, speaker; Frank Harmon, pastor.
4. Cedar View Church, Olive Branch: Revival, Apr. 5 - 8; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Justin Gates, speaker.

OBITUARY

1. Vance H. Dyess, 78, died Mar. 26 at the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center. Services were Mar. 29 at Star Church, Star with internment in the Star Church cemetery. Dyess was a native of Jefferson Davis County and grew up in Prentiss and Carson. He pastored for over 30 years, including pastorates at Bethel Church and Spring Hill Church, Leake County, New Bethel Church in Neshoba County, Bethel Church, Hazelhurst, Star Church, Star, Sunshine Church, Brandon, Mt. Creek Church, Florence, Trinity Church, Pearl, Raymond Road Church, Jackson, Rock Hill Church, Brandon, and Calvary Church, Braxton. He is survived by his wife Shirley Mae Jones, Star; sons, David Dyess (Barbara) and Van Dyess, Star; daughters, Belinda Taylor (Bill) of Florence and Luann Smithhart (Roger) of Florence; three brothers, five sisters, nine grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. First Church Runnelstown



2. Downey ordination



3. Berry and Wren



4. Robertson licensing



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

1. First Church, Runnelstown, held its first Men of Desire fellowship, with over 400 men and boys in attendance. Speakers included Ted DiBiase, Marty Haggard, Jim Futral, Rick Erwin, Argile Smith, Richard Headrick, Mitch Williams, Arlis Nichols, and Kent Miller. Shown are the participants.

2. Oakdale Church, Brandon, ordained Chris Downey to the gospel ministry Mar. 22 at the request of First Church, Fannin. Shown are Ron Bird, Beth Downey, Downey, and Rick Henson.

3. First Church, Crystal Springs, ordained Jonathan Watkins Berry to the gospel ministry. Shown are Berry and Eddie Wren.

4. First Church, Ocean Springs, licensed Scott Robertson to the gospel ministry Mar. 8. Shown are Mike Barnett, Christian Stubbs, Robertson, and Terry Upchurch.

5. Hebron Church, Smithdale, recently held a deacon ordination service for Murray Reynolds. Shown are pastor Cletus Moak, Ernie Whittington, Reynolds, Aneta Reynolds, Alton Foster, and Martin Hayden.

6. Harmony Church, Louisville, ordained Larry Gregory as deacon Mar. 15. Shown are Jerry Lundy, Gregory, and Glenda Gregory.

7. First Church, Batesville, recognized Will and Erin Odom during a commissioning service Dec. 7, 2008. The Odoms will be serving as missionaries in Mexico. Shown are the Odoms and transitional pastor P.J. Scott.

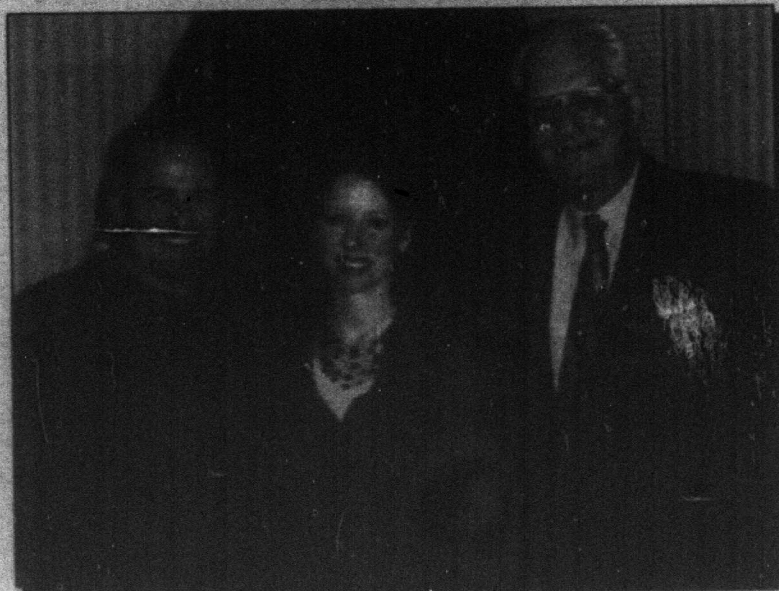
8. First Church, West Point, hosted the West Point DiscipleNow weekend Feb. 27 - Mar. 1, with approximately 300 students and leaders from ten local churches. Shown are the students and leaders from First Church.



5. Reynolds ordination



6. Gregory ordination



7. Odom commissioning

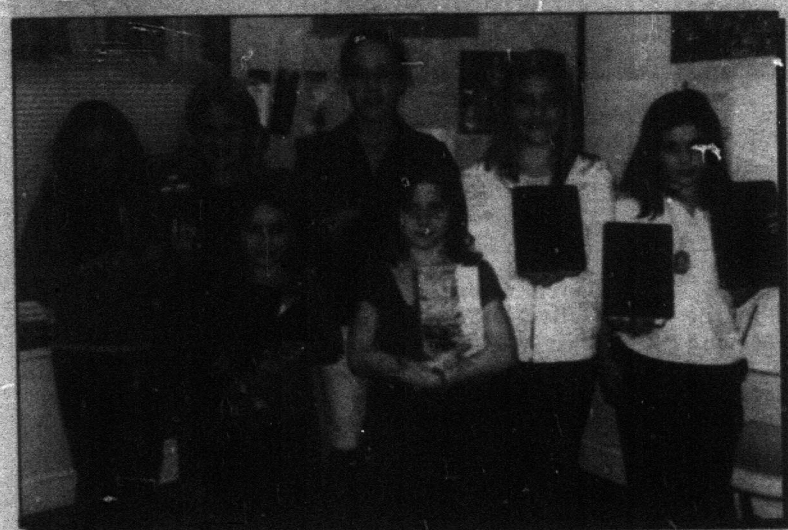


8. First Church West Point

JUST FOR THE RECORD



10. Fredonia Church



11. Escatawpa Church



12. Scott County Ministry Day



13. Cedar Grove Church

9. Join Christian motorcyclists from all over the country May 22 - 25 for the Rally to Ridgecrest. The event includes speakers, music, meals, and discovering the ministry value of motorcycling. Call (800) 588-7222 for information or reservations.

10. The GAs of Fredonia Church, New Albany, enjoyed a lock in Mar. 6-7 during which they learned about missions, did a mission project for the church, and worked in their World Venture book. Shown are the participants.

11. The GAs of Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa collected Bibles and underlined the Roman Road to give to people without Bibles. Shown are the participants.

12. Scott County Ministry Day was held Feb. 14 at First Church, Morton. Participating churches included Branch Church, Springfield Church, Steele Church, North Morton Church, and First Church. Shown are the participants.

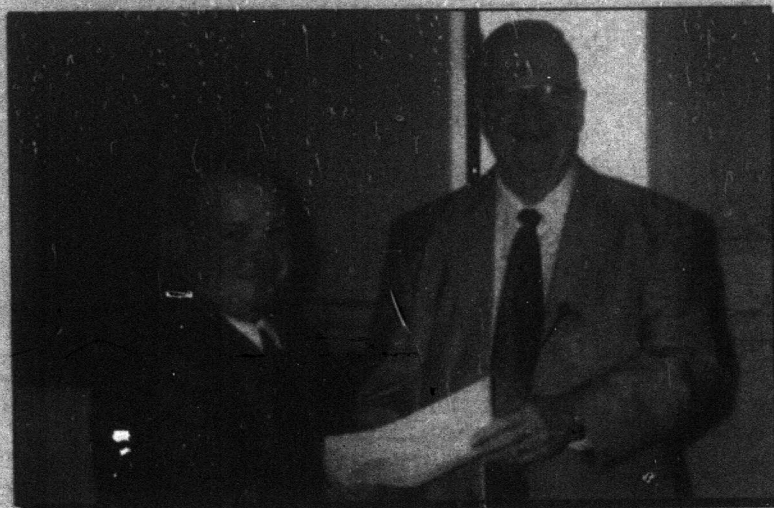
13. Cedar Grove Church, Columbia, held a baby dedication service Feb. 15, with 18 babies/children and 13 families represented. Shown are the participants.

14. East Columbia Church, Columbia, licensed Brandon McMichael to the gospel ministry Jan. 11. Shown are McMichael and pastor Philip Duncan.

15. The Mission Friends from Poplar Flat Church, Louisville, planted a tree at the Bee Hives Homes of Louisville, and afterwards entertained the residents with a song. Shown are the participants.

16. Cleary Church, Florence, is sponsoring a free concert Apr. 4, 3 - 6 p.m., at Winner's Circle Park in Flowood. Topher Man and Ember, music; includes space jumps, rock climbing wall, popcorn, cotton candy, and more. For information call (601) 845-2020 or email media@clearybaptist.org.

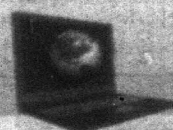
17. Crossgates Church, Brandon, is presenting Crossgates Live, Apr. 5, 6 p.m., including their worship choir, Ballet Magnificat, and a ministry time led by David Jett. CDs and DVDs of the event will be available for purchase. For information, call (601) 825-2562 or visit www.crossgates.org.



14. McMichael licensing



15. Poplar Flat Church Mission Friends



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Crossover '09 to cover Louisville during SBC meeting

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Even storied, 135-year-old Churchill Downs — home of the Kentucky Derby — will be among the ministry venues as Southern Baptists engage in Crossover Louisville '09.

Now in its 21st year, Crossover is an evangelistic thrust to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ the week before the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in each year's host city.

Crossover Louisville '09 will kick off with Intentional Community Evangelism (ICE) on June 14, and will culminate the June 19-20 weekend prior to the June 23-24 SBC annual meeting at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

Crossover will be jointly sponsored by SBC's North American Mission Board (NAMB), the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Long Run Association, Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union and Southern Seminary.

"Our objective is to share Jesus and have a lasting impact on metro Louisville," said Charles Barnes, longtime Baptist lay leader in Louisville, retired banking executive and chairman of the Crossover Louisville '09 steering committee.

"We're not interested in things that will have some glamour for only a week or so and then die," Barnes said. "We want to go at things in a way that will not only win people to Christ but will disciple them thereafter."

"Hopefully, out of Crossover '09's block parties and festivals, we will not only have decisions for Christ but will have new churches that will emerge. We hope it will spark us to a new era of growth among all our churches and as a catalyst to move forward more aggressively."

Barnes said Long Run Association includes some 160 Southern Baptist churches, and about 40 of them will participate in 32 block parties in various Louisville neighborhoods. Five churches will band together for a single block party in Veterans Park in the Louisville suburb of Jeffersonton.

Hundreds of Southern Baptist volunteers from around the nation are expected to come to Louisville to support Crossover events — the block parties, an international fair featuring nine different ethnic groups, a separate Hispanic fair, and door-to-door evangelism by ICE team volunteers from NAMB and across the country.

Metro Louisville's one million population includes some 50,000 Hispanics, with several hundred living

right around Churchill Downs working as jockeys, trainers, groomers, and in other capacities, said Joshua Del Risco, NAMB's coordinator for multiethnic evangelism.

With help from Yurian Santiesteban, Southern Baptist chaplain at Churchill Downs, Crossover volunteers will visit the racetrack, witness to the Hispanic horsemen, and invite them to nightly revival services at 10 area Hispanic churches, including a new church plant located almost across the street from Churchill Downs, Iglesias Baptista Victoria (Victory Baptist Church).

"When we leave Louisville, these 10 young Hispanic churches will be expected to continue their growth and keep implementing the things we learned during Crossover," Del Risco said.

Walnut Street Church will be the host church for the Crossover initiative, with eight other churches serving as ICE "anchor churches": Galilee Church, Bible Community Fellowship, Emmanuel Church, Guiding Light Church, Hunsinger Lane Church, Immanuel Church, St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church and Temple of Faith Church.

Victor Benavides, coordinator of urban evangelism for NAMB, said planners are praying for at least 2,000 salvation decisions and six to eight new church plants resulting from Crossover in Louisville.

"This is an opportunity for Southern Baptists to be a part of something God is doing," Benavides said.



CROSSING OVER — Bobby Worthington (right) explains the Gospel to Nathaniel Harris, 20, before Harris prays to receive Christ during Crossover San Antonio in 2007. Slated this year in Louisville, Ky., Crossover is a series of evangelistic events led by Southern Baptist volunteers preceding the SBC annual meeting each June. (BP file photo)

"Crossover is an evangelistic effort in a small window when we can go out there and win people for Christ. It will show us what the revival of a spiritual awakening could be like if we got out there and did it on a regular basis."

"We want people not just to pray for revival, but to get involved in it by coming to Louisville and sharing the Gospel with a lost person."

Since Crossover originated during the SBC annual meeting in Las Vegas in 1989, more than 41,000 individuals have prayed to receive Christ.

For additional information about Crossover Louisville '09, to register as a volunteer or to participate in ICE, go to www.crossoverlouisville.com.

Ethics agency condemns change in federal marijuana policy

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Obama administration's "surrender to bad state policies on so-called medicinal marijuana will have disastrous effects," a Southern Baptist ethics leader said in response to a shift in marijuana

policy indicated by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

"Medicinal marijuana is the Trojan horse of the marijuana decriminalization movement," said Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy of the Southern Baptist Ethics &

Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville.

The federal government no longer will raid medical marijuana distributors if they are in violation only of federal law and not of state law, Holder told reporters March

18 during a question-and-answer session at the Department of Justice, according to the Associated Press.

The new policy under President Obama marks a switch from that of the previous administration. During the Bush administration, federal agents raided medical marijuana distributors in California, even though that state's law allowed its distribution and use for such a purpose.

"The policy is to go after those people who violate both federal and state law," Holder said. Federal law prohibits the sale of marijuana for medical purposes, but California and 12 other states have legalized the use of medical marijuana.

The other dozen states are Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, according to the Drug Policy Alliance Network.

"Given the limited resources that we have, our focus will be on people, organizations that are growing, cultivating substantial

amounts of marijuana and doing so in a way that's inconsistent with federal and state law," Holder said, AP reported.

Duke said the Obama administration's decision "is not the kind of change America needs." Medicinal marijuana, he said, is "a threat to our nation's well-being and health, not a prescription for better life."

The failure to enforce federal anti-drug laws will not help the sick or society, Duke said. Marijuana has not been shown to be especially helpful in relieving pain, he said. Its greater medicinal use likely will lead to increased usage by young people, potential legalization for recreational purposes, and widespread drug-related problems, Duke said.

Advocates for medical marijuana use had a different response to the policy change. "It signals a new direction and a more reasonable and sensible direction on medical marijuana policy," said Kr Hermes, a spokesman for Americans for Safe Access.

STAFF CHANGES

1. Fellowship Church, Starkville, has called R.C. "Dickie" Bryan as pastor. Bryan comes from Hebron Church where he had served since July, 1978. He attended Mid-South Bible College, Memphis, Mississippi State University, and holds a degree from Mid-South. He comes with his wife, Donna. The Bryans have three children, 13 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

2. Evansville Church, Coldwater, has called Jacob Coleman as youth minister. He is currently in school studying secondary education and will attend seminary after graduation.



1. The Bryans

Fine against Turkish Christians a 'crippling precedent'

ISTANBUL (BP) — The lawyer representing two Turkish Christians fined for "illegal collection of funds" plans to take the case to a European court because he fears the court-ordered fine sets a crippling precedent for churches, according to Compass Direct News, which provides reports on Christians worldwide who are persecuted for their faith.

Hakan Tastan and Turan Topal each paid the fine of 600 Turkish lira (US\$360) to a civil court in the Beyoglu district of Istanbul. The verdict cannot be appealed within the Turkish legal system, but their lawyer said he is considering taking the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

The ruling refers to the men receiving church offerings without official permission from local civil authorities. Nearly all Protestant fellowships in Turkey are registered as associations, with very few having status as a recognized religious body,

and a strict application of the law would limit the scope of churches collecting funds.

Although the punishment is a relatively small fine, their lawyer told Compass there is now a precedent that authorities could use to harass any church for collecting tithes and offerings.

"For now, this court decision is an individual decision, but we fear in the future this could be carried out against all churches," said defense attorney Haydar Polat.

Umut Sahin, spokesman for the Alliance of Protestant Churches of Turkey, agreed the case was worrisome for the country's small Protestant community and could set a disturbing precedent to be against other congregations.

When originally charged, the two men were summoned to police headquarters just before church services. Tastan and Topal were given a "penalty" sheet from security police that ordered each to pay the fine for breaking a civil law.

The court decision to fine them, enacted on Nov. 11, 2008, but not delivered until March 13, denied their request to drop the penalty. The two men claimed they were only collecting money from their co-religionists.

Judge Hakim Tastan ruled at the First Magistrate Court that the two men were guilty of violating section 29 of Civil Administrative Code 2860, which forbids the collection of money without official permission from local district authorities.

In light of the charge of "insulting Turkishness," the two men believe the smaller accusation of collecting money illegally is merely part of a wider effort by the state to harass and discredit Turkish Christians.

"They are doing this to bother and intimidate us, possibly to pressure us to leave the country," Tastan told Compass. "They have the intention to hinder church establishment and the spread of the Gospel."

Tastan has spoken publicly about his strong sense of pride in his Turkish identity and frustration with state institutions biased against religious minorities. "This case is proof that Turkey's legal system regarding human rights isn't acting in a just and suitable way," he said.

The civil court case was the second set of longstanding charges against the two men. The first involves Turkey's notorious Article 301, a loosely defined law that criminalizes insulting "the Turkish nation."

On Feb. 24 a Silivri court received the go-ahead from the Ministry of Justice to try the men under Article 301. The crux of the first case — originally leveled against them in 2007 by ultranationalist lawyer Kemal Kerincsiz, now indicted in a national conspiracy to overthrow the government — focused on the two men's missionary efforts as defaming Islam.

Due to lack of proof and no-shows by the prosecution team's witnesses, the converts

from Islam believe they will be acquitted in their next hearing on May 28.

Turkey has come under recent criticism over its handling of religious minority rights by a Council of Europe report, accusing the country of "wrong interpretation" of the Lausanne Treaty as a pretext for refusing to implement minority rights, according to the Hurriyet Daily News.

The 1923 treaty, penned between Turkey and European powers following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, only recognizes Greeks, Jews, and Armenians as minority populations in Turkey.

More troublesome, according to the report, Turkey's basis of rights for its non-Muslim minorities is built on reciprocity with Greece's treatment of its Muslim minorities. This basis pushes both nations to a "lowest-common denominator" understanding of minority rights, rather than a concept of universal freedoms.

LifeWay: Americans would attend church by personal invitation

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Despite worries among evangelicals that Americans are set against attending church, most people would attend if invited in a way that sparks their responsiveness.

A recent study by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention and LifeWay Research, the research arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, found that 67% of Americans say a personal invitation from a family member would be effective in getting them to visit a church.

A personal invitation from a friend or neighbor would be effective for 63% of those surveyed.

"We want to help Christians discover what approaches work best in today's culture," said Ken Weathersby, NAMB senior strategist for evangelization. "It's not about changing the Gospel but determining how best to share it."

Nearly two-thirds (63%) are willing to receive information about a local congregation or faith community from a family member, and 56% are willing to receive such information from a friend or neighbor.

"The primary lesson North American believers should learn from this research is that many of your unchurched friends are ready for an invitation to conversation," said Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research. "Unbelievers next door still need a simple, personal invitation to talk, to be in community and to church."

"Clearly, relationships are important and work together with marketing."

The survey, commissioned by NAMB and conducted by LifeWay Research, may be the largest survey ever conducted of Americans' receptivity to different methods of church invitations. LifeWay Research surveyed more than 15,000 adults in December 2008 using a random, demographically balanced, stratified sample of Americans.

NAMB commissioned the research as one of the steps to prepare for God's Plan for Sharing, its national evangelism initiative that will launch nationwide in 2010.

Of 13 approaches tested, personal invitations from family members or friends is the only method that a majority of Americans say would effectively draw them to church. Visiting door-to-door received the least favorable reception.

Less than a quarter of Americans (24%) are willing to receive information from a local congregation through a visit to their door. Nevertheless, 31% say a visit to their door would be effective in getting them or others to visit a church.

Church advertising efforts take a back seat to personal invitations from family and friends. Americans say they are somewhat willing or very willing to receive information about church via newspaper ads (46%); radio ads (41%) and television ads (40%).

People reacted similarly to receiving information from a local congregation through outdoor advertising (46%) and letters mailed to the home (45%). Just over 10% are very willing to receive information from those forms of advertising; up to a third, somewhat willing.

Less than 10%, however, think such ads would be very effective in getting them or others to visit a church.

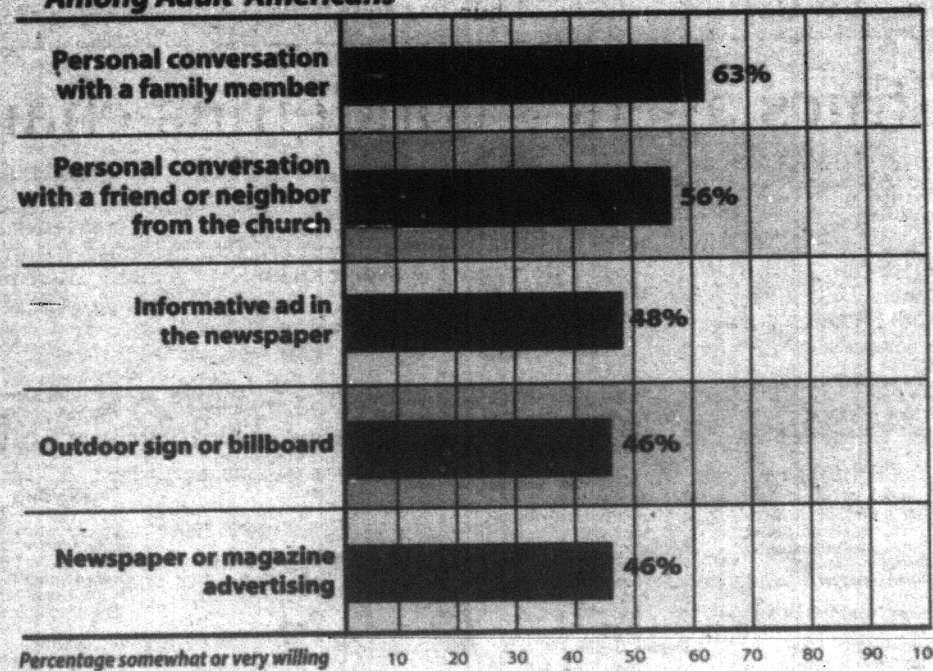
"This research confirms that media advertising efforts can undergird and enhance those personal approaches while not relying on them alone," said Brandon Pickett, leader of NAMB's communications team.

Internet communication from churches also is unwelcome by most Americans. Sixty-six percent of those surveyed are unwilling to receive information through an e-mail message, and 70% say e-mail would be ineffective in getting them to visit a church.

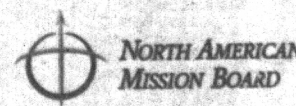
In addition to the method of inviting, the inviter's denomination makes a difference. Americans are most open to invitations from nondenominational churches

Top 5 ways people are most willing to receive information about a local congregation

Among Adult Americans



Percentage somewhat or very willing



NORTH AMERICAN
MISSION BOARD



www.lifewayresearch.com

and least open to invitations from Mormons. Twenty percent of respondents selected a nondenominational church when asked in the survey.

"Considering your response to the methods used by a local congregation or faith community ... would the invitation be more effective, less effective or about the same if you knew the invitation was

from one of the following types of churches?" Southern Baptist invitations are more effective for 11% of Americans, while Roman Catholic invitations are more effective for 15%.

More than two-thirds (67%) find invitations from Mormons less effective. Invitations from a Pentecostal church are less effective for half of Americans.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

MARCH 1 - 20, 2009

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Shannon McAlpin

Virginia Hung

The Brigg Abercrombie Family

Larry & Joyce Fulton

The John Herrington Family

The Mark Moore Family

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Dr. & Mrs. Linuel D. Jayroe

James McGee

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Mr. & Mrs. Johnny W. Wever

Bill & Sue Peterson

Adult III SSC, North Columbia BC

Bill Prewitt

Patriarch SSC, Ackerman BC

Mr. & Mrs. J. B. West

Mr. & Mrs. Rex Cowart

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Mr. John Dell Hucabee

Nancy & Danny Shows

Mrs. Pam Quackenbush Abel

Richie & Frances Deffenbaugh

Fern Aguzzi

Mr. & Mrs. John F. Miller Jr.

Mrs. Jimmie Ruth Allen

Jimmy & Jo Jenkins

Mrs. Helen Alabrooks

Mrs. Joy B. Roberts

Dorothy Anderson

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Mc & Mrs. Blaine Elliott

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R. W. & Jane Cantrell

Michael Bennett

Bill & Sharon Newsum

V. H. "Bud" Blackwell

Mrs. Betty Horton

Daisy Bone

Pleasant Hill BC

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Barry Bosarge

Mr. & Mrs. James R. Dale

Mrs. Gladys Boswell

Ruby Taylor SSC, FBC-Union

Mrs. Nell Brashier

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Grandmother of Blake & Cindy Brown

Mr. John Dell Hucabee

Nancy & Danny Shows

Hampton Burris

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Theresa Fae Butler

Mrs. Bertie M. Kennedy

Jimmie Callicott

Taylor BC-Taylor

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Mr. & Mrs. Billy Pyron

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Mr. & Mrs. Bobby McGowan

Eunice Hollingsworth

Mr. John Dell Hucabee

Nancy & Danny Shows

Martha Magee Holloway

Joyce C. Allen

Mary Petty

Mr. Johnny Hoff

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Jesus: Delusional Dreamer
or God's Messiah

Luke 23:33, 35-49

By Arthur Story

This week we begin a series of lessons designed to help people know Jesus and His hope for their lives. In each of these four lessons we will be challenged to examine ourselves and make significant decisions.

As we begin this first lesson, it's important for us to remember that opinions about Jesus are vast and varying. If you're not certain of this fact, simply stand on a street corner and ask people about Jesus. Your conversations with people will reveal a multitude of views ranging from just plain bizarre to those that indicate that a saving relationship with Jesus exists. Interestingly, if you set aside the unique idiosyncrasies of these varying views, all of them can be separated into one of three categories that can be seen in Luke 23.

The first category of people's views about Jesus is seen in the crowd. The crowd at the cross was made up of the curious people that came out for the spectacle. They had either seen or heard about Jesus' signs, His teachings, and His assertion of divinity.

As the crowd stood before the three crosses that day, they were only concerned with Jesus and not the criminals beside Him. Surely someone in the crowd had been harmed by one of the criminals or at least knew someone that had been harmed by one of them. Yet, no one's attention was focused on them. Jesus was the focus of the crowd's attention. It's the same today. In a world of numerous religions, a world filled with drug problems,

teen pregnancy, financial abuses, government incompetence, etc., what is the focus of speculation, ridicule, and harsh criticism? It's not Islam, Mormonism, Scientology, Buddhism, nor the prevailing issues of the day. The harshest attacks are reserved for Jesus and those who follow Him!

Story

Like the crowd gathered at the cross, today's people are engaged in wasted conversation. Some of those in the crowd at the cross were talking with each other about Jesus. People today do the same thing. They spend their time talking about what He did, questioning His divinity, and criticizing Him. Others in the crowd spent their time openly mocking Him to His face. This too is a common practice in our day. Just like the crowd at the cross, people today need to talk with Jesus and stop talking about Him with others or mocking Him. Salvation and understanding come through intimacy with Jesus; not talking to others about Him.

The Criminals
(Luke 23:39-43)

The second category of views about Jesus is seen in the criminals. Both of the criminals interacted with Jesus and then chose to act. One chose to receive Him while the other chose to ridicule Him.

The criminals on the crosses beside Jesus had one thing in common; they were both guilty men deserving death. Aside from that common trait they were diametrically different. One criminal was calloused toward Jesus. The other criminal was convicted about Jesus. One spoke harshly and abusively to Jesus. The other realized who Jesus was and sought compassion from Him. One of the criminals died in his sin. The other criminal died saved by Jesus from his sin.

Things today aren't any different. Some today are calloused toward Jesus, speak abusively of Him, and die in their sin. Others are convicted, recognize Him as Savior, seek His compassion, and are saved by Jesus from the penalty of their sins.

The Centurion
(Luke 23:44-49)

The third category of views about Jesus is seen in the cen-

turion. The centurion was an unlikely candidate in an unlikely situation to affirm Jesus' true identity. Yet, he came to recognize Jesus as the righteous, innocent, Son of God. He had been exposed to the evidence for Christ and the opinions of others about Him. As a result, he made an intellectual decision concerning Christ's divinity. Regrettably, no indication is given that he made an authentic decision to follow Him.

Many people today are like this centurion. They have seen the evidence, heard the testimonies of others, made their examination, and come to the realization that Jesus is the Son of God. Like the centurion, these people willingly admit that Jesus is God's Son. Unfortunately, it isn't enough to recognize and affirm that Jesus is the Son of God. Individuals must receive Him as Savior.

So, what is your category? Are you in like those in the crowd? Are you like the criminals? If so, which criminal? Or, are you like the centurion?

Story is Minister of Education, First Church, Louisville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

The Sacrifice is Sufficient

Isaiah 53:2-12

By Beth S. Bowman

The idea of sacrifice in today's world is foreign to most people. What motivates us to give another person our devotion? Why would we want to surrender our ideas, passions and desires? A common definition for sacrifice is "to devote, with loss or suffering." When I think of a modern example of sacrifice, the soldiers who serve in our military comes to mind. Recently a troop from Jackson left to serve in the war. Several families with young children sent their husbands and Dads away for eleven months. To me, that is sacrifice in its purest form. These military Dads will devote themselves to harsh conditions, life-threatening situations, and absence from their families. These men not only know the meaning of sacrifice, they will know what sacrifice

means on a daily basis. In this awesome passage today, we read Isaiah's description of Jesus' sacrifice and the devotion of Father God to a sin-filled world. **Unrecognized Sacrifice (Isaiah 53:2-3)**

These verses give us a background of Jesus in his humble beginnings. Verse 2 says, "He grew up before Him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground." Plants and roots were common, everyday elements. These symbols represent his humble beginnings in to the world. This entrance was not the magnificent start that the Jews had envisioned for the Savior. His sacrifice began with His being stripped of His royalty and His heavenly privileges as He enters with little fanfare or prominence.



Bowman

Costly Sacrifice
(Isaiah 53:4-6)

It is painful for parents to allow their children to suffer the consequences of their behavior. How much more excruciating it must have been for the Father God to know that the burden and punishment for our sin was carried by His Only Son. Verse 6 compels us to try to comprehend the extent of the sufferings of Christ. These verses give an account of the sufferings of Christ and the design of His sufferings. It was for our sins and on our behalf that our Lord Jesus suffered. Romans 3:23 states, "We have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God." We are saved from the punishment and consequences of sin by laying our sins on Christ.

Voluntary Sacrifice
(Isaiah 53:7-9)

The image of Jesus as a lamb references Old Testament sacrifices when a perfect lamb was the Passover sacrifice. The life of Christ mirrors a sacrificial lamb.

At the time of God's choosing Jesus, who was without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19), became the perfect Passover lamb sacrifice. Jesus met all the requirements set forth by God for a Passover lamb to fulfill the blood sacrifice requirement for the remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22). His blood sacrifice was made so that when we believe and obey, accept the substitutionary shedding of blood for our sins, we might be saved from the wages of sin and death. God established a new covenant with man for the payment of sin.

Effective Sacrifice
(Isaiah 53:10-12)

The work of Jesus Christ on the cross is sufficient payment for the sin of all mankind. It is not the acknowledgement of this truth that brings salvation, but the belief on this truth. It is our response that brings us to a saving knowledge and then our actions reflect our beliefs. The beauty of His sacrifice brings about our justification. Justification is our right standing before God. Recently, our sixth grade son was taught

about this truth in our youth group and he explained it to me this way. "Justification is standing behind Jesus because He paid for my sins. So, when God looks at me, He sees the sacrifice of Jesus and not my sin." We can rejoice in our right standing before God thanks to Jesus. Jesus' death was the most effective, the most beautiful and the most compelling capitulation there ever was or ever will be.

We in the church think we have really done something special with our small gifts of time to teach a class or to serve as ushers. We give a Saturday here or there or maybe some extra money when there is a special need. But do we really understand sacrifice? I don't really think so. My pitiful, small sacrifices pale in comparison to His willingness to carry my sins and die on the cross. Doesn't He deserve my sacrifice of worship, reliance and total obedience?

Bowman is Minister of Connection, First Church, Brandon.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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THE BAPTIST
Record

Welch: 'Send angels from on high' to protect troops

FOYT DRUM, New York (BP) — A divine appointment in an airport gave former Southern Baptist Convention and Vietnam War veteran Bobby Welch an opportunity to encourage 400 members of an elite U.S. Army unit and personally share the Gospel with soldiers who fight in some of the harshest conditions imaginable.

As co-author of the F.A.I.T.H. evangelism strategy, Welch tells others about Jesus Christ everywhere he goes. As the Southern Baptist Convention's strategist for Global Evangelical Relations, he also travels extensively.

When Welch met Kevin Mangum in an airport terminal during one of those trips, it wasn't long before Welch was talking about Jesus. He learned Mangum is a Christian and member of a Methodist church. Welch, a decorated U.S. Army veteran who was seriously wounded in Vietnam, had even more to talk about with Mangum, a brigadier general who commands the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in upstate New York.

Several weeks later, James White, the garrison chaplain at Fort Drum, asked Mangum if he knew someone he would like to invite as the keynote speaker at the post's annual National Prayer Breakfast.

"Get me Bobby Welch," White said. Mangum told him.

White got Welch and on March 2, Welch stood before nearly 400 soldiers. During his weekend at the post, Welch also met with the wives and families of Baptists and others whose loved ones serve overseas, as well as a group of soldiers recuperating from service-related injuries.

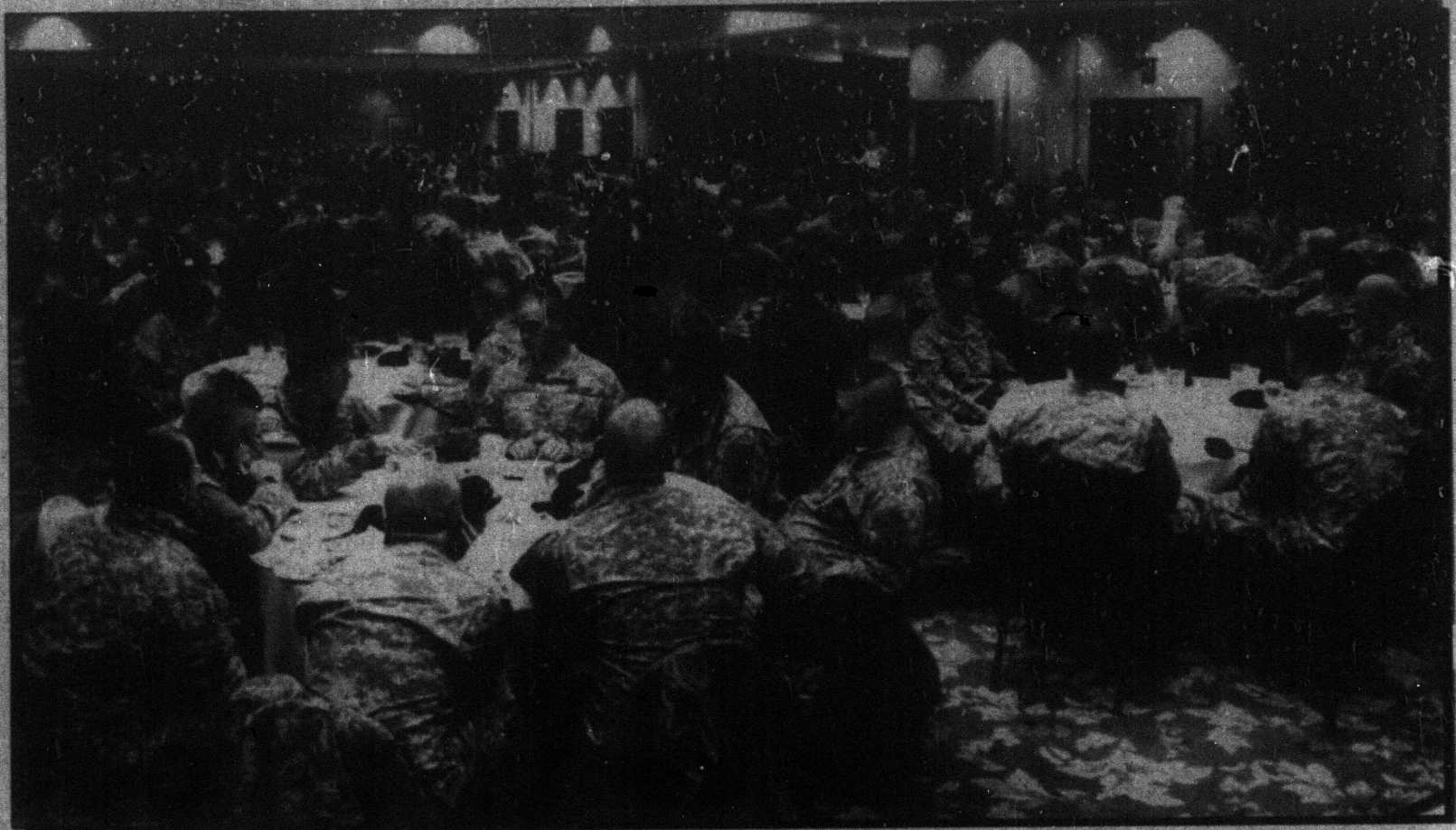
"I've known about the 10th Mountain Division since coming into the military," Welch told the camouflage-clad crowd. "I'm very much aware of who you are, where you go, what you do, and I am very, very grateful and humbled about being here this morning."

"While praying for our meeting earlier this morning, I was moved almost to tears about what an honor and a privilege it is to be among you."

Welch told the soldiers that "multiplied millions" of Americans are deeply grateful for the "extreme sacrifices" their soldiers make as they defend freedom around the world.

"What I'm trying to say to you is just how endeared and indebted we are to you — how we are strengthened and secured by what you do, and your presence. We're mindful of your sacrifice, the deep, deadly, hurtful, unforgettable, and never-ending sacrifice that so many are making," Welch said.

"You're going a lot of weird places, but for the rest of us, that's holy ground because you're laying your all on the line for people like us, and what we stand for in your home and my home. We thank God for you. We praise the Lord for who you are today as a soldier."



WELCH ADDRESS — Nearly 400 soldiers of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division of Fort Drum, New York, gathered for their annual National Prayer Breakfast observance, March 2, where the SBC Executive Committee's Strategist for Global Evangelical Relations, Bobby Welch, delivered the keynote address. Welch is a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and a decorated U.S. Army veteran who was nearly killed in combat in Vietnam. (BP photo)

Welch then read Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance."

Welch told the group about a personal meeting he had with President George W. Bush, in which "the very first thing he wanted to talk about was my military experience."

Welch said that during the conversation, he reached over to make a point by claspings Bush's wrist. "Now, evidently, you ain't supposed to do that, because curtains started moving, doors started opening and people started moving in," Welch said, as the soldiers chuckled.

Welch said he told Bush he volunteered for everything he did in the

military, including training for infantry, Ranger, airborne, and jungle service, "and Mr. President, there's never been a second since I volunteered to do all that; and Mr. President, there's never been a second since I was lying on that battle field with my guts blown out and left there to die, and Mr. President, there's never been a second up until this moment in the Oval Office with you, never a second, Mr. President, that I haven't been proud and thankful for the opportunity to give my life for this country and my family," Welch said, "and Mr. President, that's exactly the kind of people you have in the U.S. military today."

Welch said Bush also asked how a soldier musters the courage to run headlong into enemy gunfire. "Mr. President, I think the first answer is that, if you don't get up and run at them, they're gonna get up and run at you. If

you don't get them, they're gonna get you," Welch said.

Addressing the soldiers, Welch noted U.S. military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, asking, "...and, by the way, that's the idea behind what we're doing today, isn't it? If we don't go get them, they're gonna come and get us."

Welch said he told Bush he was trained for combat dangers and was inspired "by what I'd already seen of other men. 'Also, others were depending on me, Mr. President, but I think the main thing is I realized that I was the leader, and something needed to be done.'"

Welch told the Fort Drum audience that there is "solace and solutions" for people who suffer from the traumas of war.

"I'm not unacquainted with what happens to you when you come back from a war. I know of the accounts of how it is to be caught in the middle of the night crawling around in the bed, screaming, 'Where's my weapon? Where's my weapon?'" Welch said with a trembling voice.

He swallowed hard, twice, to regain his composure. "...but there are solutions, and there is solace in that God is able to go where others can't go."

While other assistance for trauma is available, Welch said there is nothing better than what Jesus Christ offers. "In God We Trust" is still printed on our coins, and for us who are believers, we believe that but in God, you and I can still triumph through what He can do. He is able," Welch said.

Welch recounted his conversion to Christ at age 16, how he "got away from the Lord when I was in college playing football," and later became a "cigar-chompin', foul-mouthed, rear-end kickin' officer on his way up and on my way to Vietnam."

Welch recalled how he had been so badly wounded in combat that others

thought he was dead. He was thrown on the "dead pile" and, though he knew he was about to die, "could only mutter three words: 'God help me.'"

Welch offered three points of advice for those who had faced or would face such ordeals:

- Learn to leave your past. "You can never forget it, but you can learn to leave it," Welch said.

- Be sure that you seize the present. He advised the soldiers to realize they are important to others around them and could be strengthening and encouraging them.

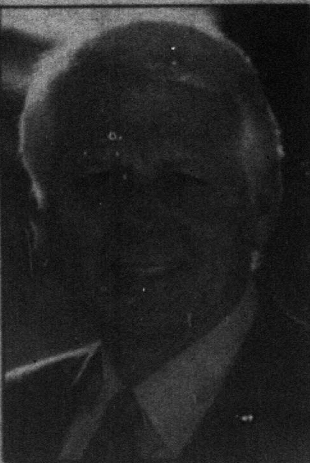
- Guard your future. "What you do now will have a lot to do with what you do later. You never know how soon life is going to be over," Welch said. "You don't have to go around the world and carry a gun to die. Life is mighty fragile."

As he closed his message, Welch prayed for "that soldier nearest eternity, who is crawling across some field, headed for a broken-down wall or a small lump of dirt — maybe with blood running out of his nose or the corner of his mouth, hands shaking, heart beating a million miles an hour — just trying to get to that little barrier, hoping to make it home."

"God, I pray right now you'll send angels from on high to protect him, bless him, and bring him home safe."

After receiving a sustained, standing ovation, Welch remained to greet dozens of soldiers who wanted to shake his hand, hug him and express their thanks.

"As both expected and desired, Bobby's message was powerful and resonated with both soldiers and family members," Mangum told Baptist Press after the event. "Having walked a mile in a soldier's boots — serving and being wounded in combat — his inspiring words left a very positive impression on our soldiers."



Welch